

Poor Peoples' Hearing

Environmental and Climate Justice

FRAMING REMARKS

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As we all know, this country was founded on the reckless extraction of natural resources, invasion of indigenous lands, commoditization and objectification of black labor... And those same practices have continued until today. Over time, the methods have evolved, but always with the same pattern..... Exploitation of labor starting with slavery and persisting with legalized under-compensation and heedless subjecting of workers to hazardous conditions, from coal mining that has killed 76,000 miners from black lung disease since 1968, to uranium mines where rates of cancer among workers are sky high..... Segregation of indigenous people into reservations while their lands were stolen, segregation of black people through redlining....continue through today where there are Navajo communities in New Mexico, living in the shadows of polluting coal plants where 70% of the people don't have electricity or running water...and we have African American communities and Latino American families living in communities where there is nary a vegetable to be found where 1 in 3 and 1 in 4 African American and Latino American children respectively are living in food insecure households, where flooding is a regular occurrence and where kids play on landfills or next to oil refineries or coal plants every day taking toxins into their respiratory, digestive, and circulatory systems...

We know the statistics that result from this exposure. African American children are 3 times more likely to enter into the hospital due to an asthma attack and twice as likely to die from asthma and African American adult men are more likely to die from lung disease while being less likely to smoke. And when we consider that property values are tied to school finance, we see a cycle that includes under-resourced schools, kids who are out of school on poor air quality days, and/or in school but unable to pay attention because of lead exposure or because of systems so full of toxic foods, it's messing with their concentration. We begin to fully understand why so many of our children are under achieving.....and how this links to the school to prison pipeline, where some folks are "lucky" to make it into prison the pipeline versus being shot down or choked to death in the street...BLACK. LIVES. MATTER.

Added to all of this, are the climate change impacts from the same polluting practices resulting in worsening food insecurity due to droughts famine in addition to disasters that steal lives, livelihoods, and cultures.

We all see that the modus operandi of many corporations is extraction and exploitation and they use their ill-gotten gains to buy our democracy and then manipulate the system to maintain the status quo so that the 1% can eat caviar and sail on yachts, while entire communities live in abject squalor, many without access to even the most basic of necessities, in this land of plenty.

The struggles for voting rights, economic justice, environmental and climate justice, gender justice, housing rights, education and health justice, LGBTQ rights and Disability rights are all interlinked.

Ending on a promising note, the people testifying will tell their stories of how they are resisting and pushing back, Gulf South is Rising under the coordination of Sister Jayeesha Dutta, The Gulf is advancing a vision for self-determination through the Gulf Futures Coalition coordinated by Sister Colette Pichon Battle, Folks throughout the South are Advancing Equity and Opportunity with the Leadership of Seandra Pope, Holmes Hummel and the folks at the Partnership for Southern Equity. The HBCUs are applying their genius to the issue of climate change anchored by the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Dillard with Beverly Wright and the Barbara Jordan and Mickey Leland School of Public Policy at Texas Southern University with Bob Bullard. The Moral Call is going out on Mondays under the leadership of Reverend William J Barber Jr. People are still "Occupying!" People's Institute for Survival and

Beyond is helping us work better together. Cooperation Jackson in Mississippi is modeling local cooperative communities. The list goes on.....

People are taking to the streets and to the pulpits, lobbying in state houses and in the halls of congress, creating justice based culture work, generating research, starting local food/energy/recycling worker co-ops, engaging in litigation, and more. Folks are standing up, organizing, crafting a new vision and doing what they need to do to steward a just transition from corporate domination to a just society that uplifts the civil and human rights of all, including the rights of Mother Earth.